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ABSTRACT

The degree of economic, social, and psychological adjustment of urban American Indians residing in Seattle, Washington was investigated. The assumption that the 3 types of adjustment are highly correlated was assessed and hypotheses relating length of urban residence and "Indianness" (observable actions and physical characteristics) to urban adjustment were also tested. A random sample of 122 Indians and 525 whites who returned a mailed questionnaire during the spring and summer of 1973 were interviewed. The sample was selected from the telephone directory. Adjustment was determined by the individual's income, education, occupation, current employment status, number of friends, membership in social organizations, degree of political activity, number of arrests and legal problems, marital stability, and 4 standardized personality scales. It was discovered that (1) Indians were poorly adjusted economically and only slightly better adjusted socially and psychologically when compared to urban whites; (2) economic, social, and psychological adjustment were not associated; and (3) neither the length of time lived in the city nor "Indianness" were related to adjustment. (Author/NQ)

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URBAN INDIAN ADJUSTMENT*

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[1973]

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Abstract

This paper investigated the economic, social and psychological adjustment of a random sample of American Indians residing in Seattle, Washington. The assumption that the three types of adjustment are highly correlated was assessed. Hypotheses relating length of urban residence and 'Indianness' (observable actions and physical characteristics) to urban adjustment were also tested. The data were obtained via interview from a random sample of 122 Indians and from a random sample of 525 whites who returned a mailed questionnaire. It was discovered that Indians were poorly adjusted economically while only slightly better adjusted socially and psychologically as compared to urban whites. Economic, social and psychological adjustment were not associated and neither the length of time the respondent had lived in the city nor "Indianness" was related to adjustment.

URBAN INDIAN ADJUSTMENT

A recently discovered phenomenon is the migration of Indian Americans from rural, primarily reservations, to urban areas. The past decade has seen over 200,000 Indian people migrating to the city. This population shift has been so marked that nationally nearly half the Indian population now dwell in cities and the number is increasing daily. Undoubtedly, this urban migration has become a major if not the dominant, influence determining attitudes, values, and behavior of Indian Americans. It is suggested that the cultural and social consequences of this migration will in the long run overshadow the consequences of earlier government policy of forced removal to reservations.

The 1970 census documents the migration, but very little is known of the assimilation of this culturally distinct group of people into mainstream America. It has been assumed that once an Indian American receives vocational training and is relocated in the city then he is quickly assimilated into middle-or lower-class America. In other words, those Indians who have left the blanket and gone to the city have left their Indianness on the reservation. Bahr (1972) in a review of studies dealing with urban Indians, contends one unanticipated and unintended consequence of federal relocation programs has been the fostering of pan-Indian activities and a greater emphasis on Indian identity as a mechanism of adjustment to urban life. In addition Vogt (1957) in an article summarizing the level of acculturation for groups of Indians in various sections of the United States, argues acceptance of white material culture is often mistakenly equated with total acculturation. Just because Indians move to the city live in modern houses or watch color television does not mean they necessarily

give up important aspects of their culture, such as native religion, ties to the land core values, kindship ties, or language. This caution is especially applicable to urban Indians who appear to accept some material aspects of middle-class culture but who may maintain significant portions of their traditional culture. The purpose of this paper was to compare levels of adjustment of samples of Indians and Anglos living in a large metropolitan area (Seattle, Washington) to determine how well Indian migrants have adjusted to American society.

Urban Adjustment

Previous work concerning urban adjustment of Indian people has primarily focused on economic adjustment while limited attention has been directed to social and psychological adjustment. There are few studies examining urban adjustment of Indians and these will be briefly reviewed.

Economic Adjustment. Most investigators agree that economic opportunities are the primary force attracting Indians to the city. Pioneering work concerning migration of Indians to urban areas was done by Verdet (1959) in Chicago and St. Louis. No sampling was attempted, but she felt those interviewed were representative of the two communities. Respondents reported a great amount of movement back and forth between reservation and city. The majority stated they had to come to the city seeking steady employment, higher wages, and a decent place to live. Verdet defined urban adjustment in terms of finding a job, being a hard worker trying hard to pay one's bills and providing both material and emotional support for one's children. She does not present data, but she concluded that most were poorly adjusted."

Ablon (1964) interviewed Indian families who had relocated to the San Francisco Bay Area. She found nearly all of the relocatees had come seeking employment and would return "home" to the reservation if work was available there. To the extent that most had found at least temporary employment they had adjusted economically to the city.

Graves and Van Arsdale (1966), Graves (1970), Weppner (1971), and Graves and Lave (1972) have systematically investigated the Navajo Indian's adjustment in Denver. Generally they found limited economic adjustment and a tendency for most migrants to return to the reservation. Graves and Van Arsdale (1966) as well as Weppner (1971) divided migrants into two groups, "stayers" and "leavers." They found stayers put greater stress on economic goals which they felt could be achieved more easily in the urban environment compared to the reservation. Weppner stressed early economic experiences (i.e., previous wage earning experience and starting wage) of migrants as the crucial factor in economic adjustment. Graves and Lave (1972) attempted to predict successful economic adjustment. Using social background characteristics and work experience. The authors were able to account for 40 percent of the variance in starting wage with the following pre-migration experiences: years of education beyond 10; highest wage prior to migration; prior vocational training; marital status; and a father as a wage earner model.

Clinton, Chadwick, and Bahr (1973) evaluated records of participants in the Bureau of Indian Affairs' Adult Vocational Training Program in the Pacific Northwest. The sample consisted of 245 participants who entered the program between 1964 and 1966. They found income, used as a measure of economic adjustment, increased four times for single individuals and nearly three times for married participants after migration. It was discovered

males were significantly more likely to succeed in training and post-migration adjustment than females. A "good" attitude as rated by the BIA official, age, marital status, Indian ancestry, and type of training were important in predicting successful completion of training and entrance into the urban labor force.

These studies indicate Indian Americans come to the city seeking economic opportunities. There is no doubt occupational opportunities are relatively more plentiful and salaries higher in cities than on reservations but so are expenses for housing, food, transportation, and other necessities. Many suspect while income is higher, standard of living remains extremely low. In a follow-up study of the effects of BIA sponsored relocation programs, three years after relocation it was found for a nation-wide sample that a large majority reported their economic situation had improved. In response to a query about standard of living since relocation, as compared to previously, 37 percent reported they were living "much better," another 32 percent reported "some better," 27 percent felt they were living "about the same" and only five percent reported that things "were worse."

The economic adjustment literature provides a picture of marginal adjustment measured by various methods. Wages go up but the question of increased costs and income relative to white urban peers remains unanswered.

Social Adjustment. Joan Ablon (1964) used participant observation and interview techniques over an 18 month period in the San Francisco Bay Area to gather data about social adjustment from 53 families who had migrated from reservations. Her study focused on the nature of social relationships established in the city by these families. She found less than 15 percent of her sample were "active" in the urban Indian community. Most respondents indicated they engaged in some white contact, but Ablon concluded it was

superficial in nature and intimate activities such as exchanging home visits or talking over personal problems occurred only with fellow Indians. This led her to conclude that 'In the course of my study in the Bay Area I did not encounter any persons I could consider to be assimilated.' (Ablon, 1964:303).

Graves (1970), in a study of Navajo migrants to Denver used arrest for alcohol related offenses as a measure of social adjustment. Denver police records for 448 Navajo migrants, 139 Spanish-Americans, and 41 Anglos were reviewed for a ten year period. The arrest rate for Indians was twenty times the Anglo rate and eight times the Spanish-American rate. This extremely high rate of arrest would indicate that Navajos are not very well adjusted to urban life in Denver. Graves rejected cultural conflict as the explanation for excessive drinking behavior and argued that Navajo migrants tended to interact with themselves and that excessive public drinking was the socially acceptable norm for this group. Thus lack of social integration into the white community resulted in the persistance of behavior that was functional on the reservation but when imported to the city interfered with adjustment.

In contrast to the above investigation, a study of Indians living in Los Angeles (Price, 1968), found that the level of interaction with whites including intermarriage, provided strong evidence of social adjustment with white society. This conclusion was also supported by the respondent's residence preferences, as only five percent reported a desire to live in an all Indian neighborhood. Price also examined several rates of deviant behavior, suicide, crime, and admittance to mental hospitals as indicators of social adjustment. The large variation between three major tribal groups in Los Angeles in rates of occurrence of these behaviors made it difficult to

generalize about Indians in Los Angeles.

The evidence concerning Indian's social adjustment in urban environments is inconsistant and indicates the need for additional research. While Ablon (1964) and Graves (1970) found a lack of social adjustment using separate measures. Price (1968) found the level of adjustment to be high. It is clear that the lack of theoretical distinctions between "types" of adjustment and the use of different indices of adjustment has confounded these results.

Psychological Adjustment. Verdet (1959) defined "Indianness" in terms of where the person lives in the spirit, contrasted to the flesh: self-identification as an Indian (regardless of blood) and acceptance of traditional Indian values. While she did not present empirical data, she did indicate most urban Indians possessed considerable Indianness. She was impressed that this Indianness was frequently manifested in the Indian communities' solidarity as evidenced by assistance given to fellow Indians. Verdet also argued that in analyzing acculturation of Indians who have migrated to the city one must realize white ways are not new to the Indian migrant. He attended white controlled schools, and was taught by white teachers, teaching white culture. He has constantly had to deal with a white bureaucracy, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and many reservations have been checkerboarded with white neighbors. A white army has used his services. Thus, the white man's world of ideas and ways are not entirely new. What may be new are the pressures of city life. She concludes that despite utilization of white material culture there was a strong psychological resistance of Indians to becoming "westernized.

Ablon (1964) discovered wide-spread acceptance of pan-Indianism in San Francisco and argued that it was an attempt to preserve a threatened Indian identity. She found that Indian migrants became more positive of

their Indianness after migrating to the Bay Area.

In a different paper, Abion (1965) focused on some of the consequences of urban relocation on the individual psychic. The question she sought to answer was learning to cope with an urban environment meant the individual must necessarily abandon Indian ways and identity. She concluded:

> I would suggest that the fact of active mastery of one's everyday situation on a daily operational level is the functional definition of success for a family. Are persons who have developed this control the less Indian for it? On the basis of my observation and interviews which almost universally encountered an ever present psychological and social awareness of Indian identity, I would suggest that these persons are not less Indian but are Indians of a little different quality -- an urban neo-Indian type. (Abion, 1965:370).

Finally Weppner (1971) had Denver employers rate Navajo employees on personal qualities such as dependability, ambition, feasibility etc., and found they rated Navajo workers significantly different from white workers on four of the five dimensions. The Navajo workers were rated as being less dependable, not as ambitious, unable to accept change as easily and more lax in planning for the future. These three studies were clearly unanimous in their conclusion that a resistance to psychological assimilation was manifest in pan-Indian activities and strong Indian self identity.

OBJECTIVES

Given the limited and often inconsistent research findings concerning urban adjustment of Indian migrants the first object of this paper was to assess the degree of economic, social and psychological adjustment of a random sample of urban Indians.

It is generally assumed that adjustment in any one of these three

areas is highly related to adjustment in the other two. The commonly accepted notion is that economic adjustment eases social adjustment and vice versa and that both result in a change in self-identity. There is some very limited support for this idea as Graves (1970) reported that economic adjustment was highly related to arrest for alcohol offenses used as a measure of social adjustment. But, as mentioned by both Verdet and Ablon, adjustment in these three areas may occur independently. Thus it may be possible for an Indian to obtain the education required for steady employment in a given occupation along with the necessary social skills to compete and yet retain his Indian self-identity. The second objective of this paper was to test the hypothesis that economic, social and psychological adjustments were highly correlated.

Another popular assumption concerning urban adjustment is the longer an individual lives in the city the greater his adjustment. The idea is that the greater the exposure to the forces of an urban environment the greater will be his adaptation to the city as those who can't make it move on. Some support exists for this hypothesis as Chadwick and White (1973) found for Spokane Indians living in Spokane, Washington that self-identification as a white was significantly related to the percent of adult life lived in an urban environment. The third objective of this paper was to test the hypothesis that length of time in an urban environment was related to urban adjustment.

A final objective concerned the relationship between various characteristics of 'Indianness' and urban adjustment. It is assumed that if the Indian migrant has accepted a white religion, married a white spouse, speaks good English, looks less Indian etc., that his adjustment to an urban environment will be more rapid and more complete than the adjustment of an individual without these

characteristics. These characteristics give the migrant a head start or partial entrance into an urban life style, which, once set in motion, results in greater adjustment. Therefore, the fourth objective was to test the hypothesis that "Indianness" was negatively related to urban adjustment.

METHODS

The data were collected from separate Indian and white samples in the spring and summer of 1973 in Seattle, Was ington. While Indian leaders estimate the Seattle Indian population at 12,000, the 1970 census enumerated 8 000 Indian residents in the greater Seattle area.

Client and membership roles from the Indian oriented social service organizations were combined with public records such as school records, arrest records etc., to generate a sampling frame of approximately 4,000 Indian adults from which a random sample was selected. Trained Indian interviewers collected the data from the Indian sample. Each respondent was paid a four dollar honorarium to complete the interview which took approximately 90 minutes.

The Indian random sample comprised three hundred and fifty-five names of which 28 percent (99) were located and interviewed. The refusal rate was only 7 percent which is quite low. The remaining potential respondents could not be located despite numerous call backs at various times of the day and week and attempts to find forwarding addresses from neighbors.

A random sample of residents of the Seattle metropolitan area was selected from the telephone directory and mailed a questionnaire. Sixty percent returned a completed instrument, while 16 percent refused and 24 percent did not respond, despite three follow up contacts including a

registered letter.

Measurement of Variables. Economic adjustment was indicated by a composite score based on each individual's income, education, major occupation and current employment versus unemployment. Occupation was assigned a status score utilizing an index developed by Siegal (1971). Social adjustment was determined by summing the respondent's number of friends, number of memberships in social organizations, degree of political activity, number of arrests, number of legal problems (both civilian and criminal) and marital stability (current marital status and duration of marriage). Psychological adjustment was measured by summing responses to four standardized personality scales. These included a four item self-esteem scale developed by Bachman, et al., (1967); a nine item anomy scale from McClosky and Schaar (1965); a ten item personal control scale from Gurin, et al., (1969); and the fifty item mental health section of the Cornell Medical Index, Brodman, et al., (1956).

Length of urban residence was determined by asking the respondent how long he or she had been living in the Seattle metropolitan area prior to being interviewed. Degree of Indianness was a composite of the respondent's and his/her's spouse's degree of Indian ancestry; Native American religious affiliation; self-identity as an Indian; frequency of attendance at pow wows; and the interviewer's rating of the respondent's physical appearance as an Indian.

FINDINGS

The degree of economic, social and psychological adjustment of random sampled Indians and whites living in Seattle are presented in Table 1. A tremendous disparity in the economic adjustment of Indians and whites living

(TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE)

in Seattle is apparent. Indians possess significantly less education, earn only half as much income, evidence over three times as high unemployment rate and have only half as high occupational status. All of these differences are statistically significant at the .001 level which strongly indicate the Indians are not as well economically adjusted as their white peers.

While it is not surprising given observations in past literature that Indians tend to be less educated and thus hold jobs on the lower end of the occupation distribution with limited income the magnitude of the disparity is surprising and should be noted. Previous literature has indicated the increased income of Indian migrants but this increase must be viewed in comparison to other urban residents. Given the low level of economic adjustment by urban Indians it is easy to understand why many Indians view the city as a concrete desert and desire to return to the reservation. Also the fact that a population experiencing the poverty described in Table 1 feel they are economically better off in the city than back on the reservation illustrates the extreme poverty existing on most reservations.

The same lack of adjustment holds true for social adjustment, although the difference is not as great. Our findings confirm those of Ablon (1964) and Graves (1970) but are at variance with Price (1968) Indians have half as many friends, belong to fewer organizations, are less active in political affairs and experience greater marital instability. It should be noted this trend is reversed concerning legal problems as whites reported nearly twice as many such problems in the past five years. This finding came as a

surprise given the Indian s high arrest rate. It is suspected Indian respondents were not aware of consumer, credit and similar type exploitation they had experienced and thus reported a lower overall rate of legal problems. This conclusion is supported by examining individual types of legal problems as whites reported many more acts of having been charged too high a price, sold faulty goods, or had merchants refuse to honor guarantees. The Indian sampled had received nasty letters from creditors, had goods repossessed, their paychecks garnished, their belongings held by a landlord, and evicted from housing significantly more frequently than the white sample. Whites perceive they experience greater exploitations by merchants, but when it comes to direct action against the individual the Indian has a much higher rate of incidence.

The low level of social adjustment of urban Indians in Seattle may be the consequence of Indians desiring to make a living in the city while at the same time retaining their Indian way of life. Because of these desires, they do not participate in the white social system any more than necessary. There was some evidence supporting this argument as only three percent of the Indian sample responded positively to the item, "If I had the chance, I would pass for white and forget my Indian identity." Also over 80 percent of the sample argued that "even after living in the city for a long time, most Indians still think and feel as Indians." There appeared to be a very strong emphasis on maintaining and enhancing Indian identity and practice of Indian ways despite living in the city all the way through the interviews. Given the strong identification with Indian values and ways, it is not surprising that Indians tend to be only marginally involved in the white social system.

On the other hand, it may be that Indians do not interact more with

whites because of discrimination by white neighbors, employers police, political leaders, etc. Support for this hypothesis was reported in an earlier paper (Bahr, Chadwick and Stauss 1973) as over 70 percent of the Indian sample had reported being the victim of discrimination in seeking housing employment, medical care, social assistance or at the hands of the police. Thus it seems that the urban Indian's low level of social integration is a consequence of both a desire to maintain Indian ways and of discrimination and rejection at the hands of whites.

The results for psychological adjustment reveal the same low level of adjustment as reported for economic and social adjustment. Our findings support the past literature that there is a difference in psychological adjustment between Indians and whites. The Indian sample evidenced significantly lower self-concepts and experienced greater feelings of anomy or alienation. The one important exception is there was no difference between Indians and whites concerning feelings of powerlessness (personal control). This finding is at variance with the Coleman Report (1965) which found minority students tended to feel that fate, not the individual, controls one's adjustment to his environment. Coleman also reported that such feelings were significantly related to academic failure for minority students but not for whites. Indians in Seattle feel that they can control their own destiny as strongly as do whites and thus this cannot be offered as a partial cause for the low level of urban adjustment.

The mental illness section of the Cornell Medical Index Questionnaire was administered to the Indian sample only. Developers of this scale contend that agreement with three or four of the 62 items is indicative of emotional problems. The Indian samples averaged eight such agreements. Given this standard nearly all of the Seattle Indian population was experiencing emotional

problems that probably interfere with other aspects of urban adjustment. In summary, the Indian-white difference in level of psychological adjustment while significant was not as great as for economic and social adjustment.

In order to assess the relationship between economic, social and psychological adjustment and their relationships with length of urban residence and Indianness composite scales for the three types of adjustment were computed. Table 2 presents the intercorrelations between the indicators used to compute

(TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE)

the composite scales and the correlation between identities and the scales themselves. The economic adjustment scale strongly correlated with all four of the indicators. Also all four of these correlations are larger than any of the intercorrelations between the indicators. The social adjustment scale is not as strong as two of the five indicators did not produce significant correlations with the composite score. The number of friends, the number of organizational memberships and political activity hang together to produce a scale emphasizing involvement in social relationships while the two indicators of problem behavior (legal problems and marital instability) are not related. The psychological adjustment composite scale also was less consistent than the economic as one of the three indicators anomy was not significantly related to the composite scale.

The bivariate correlations between the three types of adjustment are presented in Table 3.

(TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE)

None of the three correlations are statistically significant which indicates quite convincingly that adjustment in any one of the three areas can occur independent of the other two.

The correlations in Table 3 also reject the hypothesis that the longer the Indian migrant remains in the city, the greater the adjustment as none of the correlations between length of residence and adjustment are significant. The length of current residence in Seattle varied from less than one year to over 60 years with the median being 11 years. Those who had been in Seattle for long periods of time were not any more adjusted than those who had been there only a short time.

The hypothesis relating Indianness to a retarded level of adjustment was not supported either (see Table 3). Those Indians who had a high degree of Indian ancestry, were married to an Indian, practiced an Indian religion spoke a native tongue, attended pow wows frequently and who looked Indian evidenced just as much adjustment as did those who had white ancestry, were married to a white, had a white religious affiliation, spoke only English, did not attend pow wows and who looked white.

DISCUSSION

The strong evidence of lack of urban adjustment by Indian people revealed in this study calls into question the acceptance of urban migration as a panacea to the Indian problem. Public officials and administrators who have assumed that urban migration results in adjustment into American middle-class society need to re-assess the accomplishments of urban relocation programs. The Indian who has lived his entire life in Seattle, as well as the migrant, does not surrender his Indianness and blend into white society. It is time that officials, concerned others and Indians themselves examine both the

short and long range consequence of the massive migration from the reservation to the city. This study suggests that while economic improvement does result that most migrants live a fairly marginal existence in the city while clinging to most of their traditional values.

The lack of adjustment evidenced by Indians in all three areas indicate that the BIA relocation programs and others concerned with assisting the Indian migrants to adjust to city life need to provide assistance in all three areas and not just skills training. This diversification of relocation emphasis is especially important in light of the finding that adjustment in the different areas occur independently. We are not suggesting that scholarship, vocational training, direct employment programs, etc., be de-emphasized, but rather that greater attention be directed to social integration and psychological well-being. Given the finding that length of urban residence is not related to adjustment, it is also suggested that programs designed to ease adjustment be made available to all Indians in cities no matter how long they have lived there.

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Table 1

Comparison of Economic, Social and Psychological Adjustment Between Indians and Whites Living in Seattle

Indicator of Adjustment	Indian (N=96)	White (N=533)	t	P
Economic Adjustment				
Education				
Percent Some Grade School	3	1		
Percent Completed Grade School	2	3	52.0*	.001
Percent Some High School	46	8		
Percent Completed High School	24	23		
Percent Some College	20	35		
Percent Completed College	1	20		
Percent Advanced Degree	3	9		
Average Income	$4,800	$9,200	6.9	.001
Percent Currently Unemployed	26	8	12.0	.001
Occupational Status	20	36	6.7	.001
Social Adjustments				
Number of Friends	12.1	24.3	4.3	.001
Number of Organization Memberships	1.0	1.4	2.6	.001
Political Activity	3.0	3.9	4.0	.001
Marital Stability	15.1	17.2	4.4	.001
Self Reported Legal Problems	20.1	37.5	7.3	.001
Psychological Adjustment				
Self Esteem	2.6	2.8	3.5	.001
Anomy	2.8	2.6	2.4	.05
Personal Control	3.0	3.1	1.7	NS
Mental Illness (Cornell Medical Index)	8.1	---	---	----

*chi-square was used because of level of measurement.

Table 2

Correlation Matrices for Indicators of Economic, Social and Psychological Adjustment

Economic Adjustment

	Economic Adjustment	Education	Income	Unemployment	Occupational Status
Economic Adjustment	1.000	.493	.651	.607	.428
Education		1.000	.300	.211	.111
Income			1.000	.257	.285
Unemployment				1.000	.394
Occupational Status					1.000

Social Adjustment

	Social Adjustment	Number of Friends	Number of Organizations	Legal Problems	Political Activity	Marital Stability
Social Adjustment	1.000	.369	.393	.044	.468	.135
Number of Friends		1.000	.223	-.072	.178	.151
Number of Organizations			1.000	-.151	.541	.166
Legal Problems				1.000	-.153	-.007
Political Activity					1.000	.279
Marital Stability						1.000

- Table 2 Continued -

Psychological Adjustment				
	Psychological Adjustment	Self Esteem	Anomy	Mental Illness
Psychological Adjustment	1.000	.200	-.047	-.286
Self Esteem		1.000	-.147	-.215
Anomy			1.000	.115
Mental Illness				1.000

r= .196 significant at .05 level.

Table 3

Bivariate Correlations Between Composite
Measures of Social and Psychological Adjustment
Urban Residences and Indianness for Seattle Indians

Variables	Adjustment		
	Economic	Social	Psychological
Adjustment			
Economic	1.000	.139	.171
Social		1.000	.014
Psychological			1.000
Length of Urban Residence	.122	.078	.006
Indianness	-.010	-.038	.121

r= .196 significant at .05 level (N=100)